



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: December 1, 2005
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Rebecca Lind
SUBJECT: **Highlands Land Use Concept Discussion**

The agenda for the December 7th meeting includes a discussion of the two draft land use concepts for the Highlands core study area. These are the same materials that were distributed to the public at the November 15th open house. At the December 7th meeting, staff will present the two concepts and lead a discussion about them.

We are looking for Planning Commission feedback on the type of use, densities, and location of various uses. Our objective is to take input and revise the land use concepts for review at a subsequent meeting. The composite land use scenario will be used as the basis for later assumptions about zoning, density thresholds, utilities needs, transportation analysis, and environmental review thresholds.

To guide this discussion, we will evaluate how the land use concepts implement the adopted Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element policies for the Centers and for the Center Village land use designations. These policies are included for your review and discussion. In addition, several sections of the Community Design Element of the Comprehensive Plan are relevant to the development of the Highlands Sub-Area Plan. Adopted policies are shown in italics.

For Commissioners' information, a summary of the two land use concepts is presented on a summary matrix with policy numbers noted for those policies that are most directly relevant to the proposed uses. The corresponding maps are attached. Both of the concepts share similar types and densities of housing although these unit types are shown in different locations.

The Comprehensive Plan includes several sections that give direction for future Highlands development.

Land Use Concept A

The vision of Concept A is one of revitalizing the "alley concept" that was original to the Highlands plan of 1942. With use of alleys, the local streets on which buildings front can

be made more narrow. This would slow traffic and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Land Use Concept B

Concept B has a focus on a large public park and new library located at the heart of the commercial area. Pedestrian walkways connect residential areas to this community center. An emphasis is on accessibility to public spaces and public transportation.

Relevant Comprehensive Plan Policies	Use	Concept A	Concept B
Objective CD-C Objective CD-D Policy CD-12 Policy CD-13 Policy CD-14 Policy CD-15 Policy CD-16 Policy CD-26 Policy LU-322	Cottage housing (small, one-story or one-story with lofts) on small lots. This housing type is designated as “single-family residential.” Units may be owner-occupied or rental. Cottage housing is particularly suited for couples without children, single parents, and active seniors	Cottage housing may be located north of NE 16 th at Harrington Avenue NE.	Cottage housing may be located at Harrington Circle and possibly on undeveloped portions of the Housing authority parcel on Kirkland Ave (shown in brown to reflect ownership) NE, north of Harrington Avenue and NE 16 th east of Harrington, and along NE 16 th , facing Hillcrest School and the North Highlands Community Center.
Policy LU-199 Policy LU-324 Policy LU-330	Townhouses (two-story, attached at sidewalls) on small lots or commonly held land (condominium-type ownership). Townhouses would preferably have garages at the rear, accessed from alleys	In Concept A, townhouses are located along arterials and local streets and usually face other townhouses or open space	In Concept B, townhouses would be located along arterials and local streets and have garages at the rear accessed by an alley.
Policy CD-29 Policy CD-31 Policy LU-193 Policy LU-198 Policy LU-200	Mixed-use Commercial/Residential development is envisioned as buildings with commercial uses	Concept A shows two concentrations of mixed use development on Sunset Blvd. and	Concept B distributes the mixed use development continuously along both sides of Sunset

Policy LU-201 Policy LU-321 Policy LU-329 Policy LU-330 Policy LU-331 Policy LU-332	such as retail and restaurants, or professional offices connected to living units above on the ground floor with three or four stories of residential above	south on Harrington. A focused area of pedestrian oriented retail separates the mixed use areas.	and both sides of Harrington, south of Sunset without the pedestrian oriented retail node shown in Concept A.
Policy CD-15 Policy CD-16 Policy CD-26 Strategy LU-319.2	Traditional Single-Family (one- or two-story houses) is the predominate housing in Renton. Traditional single-family is typically located on lots sized approximately 5,000 square feet and larger. new, traditional single-family would replace similar housing now on large lots and could be built on many lots in the Highlands that are large enough to be subdivided	In Concept A, traditional single-family is located around the edges of the Highlands sub-area. The area off of Kirkland Place SE is shown as single family (townhouse in Concept B)	In Concept B single family is similar to Concept A however , a small area south of 10 th St is shown as single family (multifamily is in concept A)
Objective LU-CCC Policy LU-330 Policy LU-331 Policy LU-320 Policy LU-322 Policy LU-328 Policy LU-330 Policy LU-331 Strategy LU-319.2	Multi-family (three- to five-story “mid-rise”) buildings have apartments for singles or couples	. In Concept A, multi-family, mid-rise buildings are located along arterials where the Housing Authority fourplex development now exists (Edmonds, Harrington, Sunset Lane. A strip of multi-family is located on Kirkland at the rear property line of the existing commercial shopping center., Multi-family is also located adjacent to the library on NE 12 th .	In Concept B, multi-family mid-rise buildings are located in back of two-story townhouses or mixed-use commercial-residential development, on NE 10 th Street south side, and in the area of existing fourplexes bounded by Sunset Blvd. and Sunset Lane.
Policy LU-193	Neighborhood	In Concept A	In Concept B, the

Policy LU-198 Policy LU-206 Policy LU-207 Policy LU-332 Policy LU-328	Commercial Stand alone commercial Small-scale shops with commercial uses that draw customers primarily from the surrounding neighborhood	Neighborhood Commercial is shown in the heart of the study area on both sides of NE 12 th Street. This area is envisioned as a pedestrian oriented retail node.	Neighborhood Commercial areas are on the edges of the Highlands sub- area in three small nodes at Sunset and Edmonds, Sunset and 9 th , and Kirkland
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First, the top level goals of the Land Use Element provide the following broad policy direction.

Goal 8 *Promote new development and neighborhoods in the City that:*

- a) *Contribute to a strong sense of community and neighborhood identity;*
- b) *Are walkable places where people can shop, play, and get to work without always having to drive;*
- c) *Are developed at densities sufficient to support public transportation and make efficient use of urban services and infrastructure;*
- d) *Offer a variety of housing types for a population diverse in age, income, and lifestyle;*
- e) *Are varied or unique in character;*
- f) *Support “grid” and “flexible grid” street and pathway patterns where appropriate;*
- g) *Are visually attractive, safe, and healthy environments in which to live;*
- h) *Offer connection to the community instead of isolation; and*
- i) *Provide a sense of home.*

Goal 9. *Develop well-balanced attractive, convenient, robust commercial office, office, and residential development within designated Centers serving the City and the region*

The entire study area is designated as one of Renton’s future “centers” and is subject to the general centers policies. These policies are also used to guide development in Renton’s urban center.

IX. CENTERS

Goal: *Develop well-balanced attractive, convenient, robust commercial office, office, and residential development within designated Centers serving the City and the region.*

Discussion: *The Center Village designation is envisioned as a revitalized residential and commercial area providing goods and services to the Greater Highlands area. The area could potentially become a focal point for a larger area, the Coal Creek Corridor, connecting Renton to Newcastle to Issaquah. While development is envisioned at a*

smaller scale than expected in the Urban Center, the Village Center will still focus on urban mixed-use projects with a pedestrian oriented development pattern.

Objective LU-MM: *Encourage a wide range and combination of uses, developed at sufficient intensity to maximize efficient use of land, support transit use, and create a viable district.*

Policy LU-193. *Promote the innovative site planning and clustering of Center uses and discourage the development of strip commercial areas.*

Policy LU-194. *Phase implementation of development within Centers to support economically feasible development in the short term but also provide a transition to achieve new development consistent with long term land use objectives.*

Policy LU-195. *Designate Center boundaries according to the following criteria:*

- 1) The boundary should coincide with a major change in land use type or intensity;*
- 2) Boundaries should consider topography and natural features such as ravines, hills, and significant stands of trees;*
- 3) Boundaries should occur along public rights-of-way including streets or utility easements, or at rear property lines where justified by the existing land use pattern. Boundary lines should not be drawn through the interior of parcels; and*
- 4) As a maximum distance, the boundary should be drawn within a walkable distance from one or two focal points, which may be defined by intersections, transit stops, or shopping centers.*

Policy LU-196. *Designate Centers in locations with the following characteristics:*

- 1) A nucleus of existing multi-use development;*
- 2) Potential for redevelopment, or vacant land to encourage significant concentration of development;*
- 3) Center locations should be located on major transit and transportation routes;*
- 4) Center locations should be served by the City's arterial street system.*

Policy LU-197. *Change adopted boundaries only in the following circumstances:*

- 1) The original mapping failed to consider a major natural feature or significant land use that would make implementation of the boundary illogical, or*
- 2) The amount of land within a Center is inadequate to allow development of the range and intensity of uses envisioned for the Center.*

Policy LU-198. *Support new office and commercial development that is more intensive than the older office and commercial development in existing Centers in order to create more compact and efficient Centers over time.*

Policy LU-199. *Allow stand-alone residential development of various types and urban densities in portions of Centers not conducive to commercial development, or in the Urban Center in districts designated for residential use.*

Policy LU-200. *Allow residential uses throughout Centers as part of mixed-use developments. Consider bonus incentives for housing types compatible with commercial uses or lower density residential that is adjacent to Centers.*

Policy LU-201. Include uses that are compatible with each other within mixed-use developments; for example, office and certain retail uses with residential, office, and retail.

Policy LU-202. Locate and design commercial uses within a residential mixed-use development in a manner that preserves privacy and quiet for residents.

Policy LU-203. Modify existing commercial and residential uses that are adjacent to or within new proposed development to implement the new Center land use vision as much as possible through alterations in parking lot design, landscape, signage, and site plan as redevelopment opportunities occur.

Policy LU-204. Consolidate signage for mixed-use development.

Policy LU-205. Identify major natural features and support development of new focal points that define the Center and are visually distinctive.

Policy LU-206. Design focal points to include a combination of public areas such as parks or plazas, architectural features such as towers, outstanding building design, transit stops, or outdoor eating areas. These features should be connected to pedestrian pathways if possible.

Policy LU-207. Evaluate existing intersections of arterial roadways for opportunities to create focal points.

Policy LU-208. Consolidate access to existing streets and provide internal vehicular circulation that supports shared access.

Policy LU-209. Locate parking for residential uses in the mixed-use developments to minimize disruption of pedestrian or auto access to the retail component of the project.

Policy LU-210. Connect residential uses to other uses in the Center through design features such as pedestrian access, shared parking areas, and common open spaces.

The study area is designated as the Center Village Comprehensive Plan designation which has an adopted vision and implementing policies. This is the primary set of policies that will direct further development of the Highlands Sub-area Plan. These policies would be further implemented through zoning and any specific design standards adopted for the area.

CENTER VILLAGE LAND USE DESIGNATION

Purpose Statement: Center Village is characterized by areas of the City that provide an opportunity for redevelopment as close-in urban mixed-use residential and commercial areas that are pedestrian oriented. These areas are anticipated to provide medium to high-density residential development and a wide range of commercial activities serving citywide and sub-regional markets. Center Villages typically are developed within an existing suburban land use pattern where opportunities exist to modify the development pattern to accommodate more growth within the existing urban areas by providing for

compact urban development, transit orientation, pedestrian circulation, and a community focal point organized around an urban village concept.

Objective LU-CCC: *Develop Center Villages, characterized by intense urban development supported by site planning and infrastructure that provides a pedestrian scale environment.*

Policy LU-317. *Apply the Center Village Designation to areas with an existing suburban and auto-oriented land use pattern, which, due to availability and proximity to existing residential neighborhoods, are candidate locations for a higher density mixed-use type of development.*

Policy LU-318. *Implement the Center Village Designation using multiple zoning designations including Residential 10 (R-10), Center Village (CV), and Residential Multi-family (RMF).*

Strategy 319.1. *Evaluate commercial and residential development standards in the Center Village and replace zoning designations or re-zone with the vision for a Center Village designation*

Strategy 319.2. *Prepare a Highlands Plan as a sub-area plan to further refine the land use concept for and implement the Center Village land use concepts. Phasing of the Highlands Redevelopment Plan is expected to occur over a 2 – 5- year period.*

Strategy 319.3. *Areas east of Edmonds and north of Sunset currently zoned RMF are to remain in residential use. The area north of 12th St. currently zoned R-10 is to remain in residential use.*

Policy LU-320. *Allow residential density ranging from 10 to 80 dwelling units per acre in the Center Village Designation.*

Policy LU-321. *Encourage mixed-use structures and projects.*

Policy LU-322. *Orient site and building design primarily toward pedestrians and people to maximize pedestrian activity and minimize automobile use for circulation within the Center*

Policy LU-323. *Accommodate parking within a parking structure. Where structured parking is infeasible, parking should be located in the back or the side of the primary structure. Discourage parking lots between structures and street rights-of-way.*

Policy LU-324. *Use alley access where alleys currently exist. Encourage designation of new alleys in redevelopment projects.*

Policy LU-325. *Encourage shared parking to use urban land efficiency.*

Policy LU-326. *Develop design guidelines to provide direction on site design, building design, landscape treatments, and parking and circulation components of new development projects. Implementation of this policy should be phased within three years of the adoption of the 2004 Update.*

Policy LU-327. *Encourage uses in Center Villages that serve a sub-regional or citywide market as well as the surrounding neighborhoods.*

Policy LU-328. Encourage more urban style design and intensity of development (e.g. building height, bulk, landscaping, parking) within Center Villages than with land uses outside the Center.

Policy LU-329. Promote the clustering of community commercial uses and discourage the development of strip commercial areas.

Policy LU-330. Residential development within Center Villages is intended to be urban scale, stacked, flat and/or townhouse development with structured parking.

Policy LU-331. Prohibit new garden style multi-family development.

Policy LU-332. Provide community scale office and service uses.

The Community Design Element of the Comprehensive Plan also provides additional policies directing how the community with look and feel. Policies address infill development; quality development, and neighborhood character.

Community Design Element

New Development

Summary: Objectives and policies that address new development are intended to serve multiple purposes. First, concerns about new development “fitting in” to established areas of Renton have resulted in an increased awareness that site design and architecture, when planned to be compatible with the context of the neighborhood or commercial area, can make the “fit” of the new project more comfortable.

Second, these objectives and policies provide assistance to project proponents so when planning new development for Renton; they can be guided in their choices.

Third, city officials, who must make decisions regarding new projects, can use these objectives and policies to guide their review of project proposals.

Elements of new development represented by objectives and policies in this section include:

- A. Site planning
- B. Gateways
- C. Views and focal points
- D. Architecture
- E. Landscaping
- F. Streets, sidewalks, and streetscape
- G. Signs
- H. Lighting
- I. Urban Center

A. Site Planning

Summary: Site planning is the art and science of arranging structures, open space, and non-structural elements on land in a functional way so that the purpose of the development can be met, while keeping those elements in harmony with each other and with the context of the project.

Objective CD-D: New neighborhood development patterns should be consistent with Renton’s established neighborhoods and have an interconnected road network.

Policy CD-15. Land should be subdivided into blocks sized so that walking distances are minimized and convenient routes between destination points are available.

Policy CD-16. During land division, all lots should front streets or parks. Discourage single tier lots with rear yards backing onto a street. Where a single-tier plat is the only viable alternative due to land configuration, significant environmental constraints, or location on a principal arterial, additional design features such as a larger setbacks, additional landscaping, or review of fencing should be required.

- a. *Evaluation of land configuration should consider whether a different layout of streets or provision of alleys is physically possible and could eliminate the need for a single-tier plat.*
- b. *Evaluation of environmental constraints should consider whether the location and extent of critical areas prevents a standard plat design.*
- c. *Review of fencing should ensure that the development does not “turn its back” to public areas.*

Policy CD-17. *Development should be designed (e.g. building orientation, setbacks, landscape areas and open space, parking, and outdoor activity areas) to result in a high quality development as a primary goal, rather than to maximize density as a first consideration.*

Policy CD-18. *Projects should only be approved at the upper end of density ranges when the following criteria are fully addressed in project level submission.*

- a. *Trees are retained, relocated, or planted to create sufficient vegetative cover to provide a landscape amenity, shade, and high quality-walking environment in an urban context.*
- b. *Lot size/configuration and lot coverage is sufficient to provide private recreation/outdoor space for each resulting lot.*
- c. *Structures can be sited so that entry, window, and door locations create and maintain privacy on adjoining yards and buildings. Architectural and landscape design should:*
 - *Prevent window and door openings looking directly into another structure,*
 - *Prevent over-reliance on fencing, or*
 - *Prevent projections of building elements into required setbacks in a pattern that reduces provision of light, visual separation, and/or require variances of modification of standards.*

Density may be reduced within the allowed range to bring projects into compliance with these criteria.

Policy CD-19. *During development, significant trees, either individually or in stands, should be preserved, replaced, or as a last option, relocated.*

Policy CD-20. *Development should be visually and acoustically buffered from adjacent freeways.*

Policy CD-21. *Development should have buildings oriented toward the street or a common area rather than toward parking lots.*

Policy CD-22: *When appropriate, due to scale, use, or location, on-site open space and recreational facilities in developments should be required.*

Policy CD-23. *Developments should be designed so that public access to and use of parks, open space, or shorelines, is available where such access would not jeopardize the environmental attributes of the area.*

Policy CD-24. *Site design of development should relate, connect, and continue design quality and site function from parcel to parcel.*

Policy CD-25. *Site design should address the effects of light, glare, noise, vegetation removal, and traffic in residential areas. Overall development densities may be reduced within the allowed density range to mitigate potential adverse impacts.*

Policy CD-26. *Streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian or bike paths should be arranged as an interconnecting network. The use of cul-de-sacs should be discouraged. A grid or “flexible grid” pattern of streets and pathways, with a hierarchy of widths and corresponding traffic volumes, should be used.*

Policy CD-27. *New streets should be designed to provide convenient access and a choice of routes between homes and parks, schools, shopping, and other community destinations.*

Policy CD-28. *Non-residential development should have site plans that provide street access from a principal arterial, consolidate access points to existing streets, and have internal vehicular circulation that supports shared access.*

Policy CD-29. *In mixed-use developments with ground-floor retail uses, residential parking areas should not conflict with pedestrian and vehicular access to the retail component of the project.*

Policy CD-30. *If transit service is available, parking requirements may be reduced or shared parking serving multiple developments may be allowed.*

Policy CD-31. *In mixed-use developments, residential uses should be connected to other uses through design features such as pedestrian walkways and common open space.*

COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

GOALS

1. To raise the aesthetic quality of the City.
2. To strengthen the economy through high quality development.
3. To ensure that a high quality of life is maintained as Renton evolves.

Established Neighborhoods

Objective CD-C: Promote re-investment in and upgrade of existing neighborhoods through redevelopment of small, underutilized parcels, modification and alteration of older housing stock, and improvements to streets and sidewalks to increase property values.

Policy CD-9. Support modification of existing commercial and residential structures and site improvements that implement the current land use policies as re-investment occurs in neighborhoods. Such modifications may consist of parking lot design, landscaping renovation, new coordinated signage, and site plan/building alterations that update structures to contemporary standards.

Policy CD-10. Sidewalks or walking paths should be provided along streets in established neighborhoods, where sidewalks have not been previously constructed. Sidewalk width should be ample to safely and comfortably accommodate pedestrian traffic and, where practical, match existing sidewalks.

Policy-CD-11. Vacant property should be maintained (landscaped, pruned, mowed, and litter removed) or screened to prevent adverse visual, economic, and health/safety impacts on the surrounding area.

Policy CD-12. Infill development, defined as new short plats of nine or fewer lots, should be encouraged in order to add variety, updated housing stock, and new vitality to neighborhoods.

Policy CD-13. Infill development should be reflective of the existing character of established neighborhoods even when designed using different architectural styles, and /or responding to more urban setbacks, height or lot requirements. Infill development should draw on elements of existing development such as placement of structures, vegetation, and location of entries and walkways, to reflect the site planning and scale of existing areas.

Policy CD-14. Architecture of new structures in established areas should be visually compatible with other structures on the site and with adjacent development.

Visual compatibility should be evaluated using the following criteria:

- a. Where there are differences in height (e.g., new two-story development adjacent to single-story structures), the architecture of the new structure should

- include details and elements of design such as window treatment, roof type, entries, or porches that reduce the visual mass of the structure.
- b. Garages, whether attached or detached, should be constructed using the same pattern of development established in the vicinity.
 - c. Structures should have entries, windows, and doors located to maintain privacy in neighboring yards and buildings.